Tourist Village Kachhpura: Agra beyond Taj

"Explore Agra's Heritage with Its People"

INTRODUCTION:

"There is more to Agra than the TAJ; there is more to Taj than the TAJ itself".

The other side of the Taj across the river Yamuna where Mughal History has been written in edicts of stone, the river Yamuna lined with the residences of mobility was the artery, the very lifeline, which fostered the development of Mughal Agra. By weaving together these heritage relics a historic experiences of Mughal Agra has been created as "Kachhpura Tourist village".

For the tourists who wish to go beyond the conventional routes or if you are short on time yet wish to explore the precincts of Agra beyond the Taj, a walk through Kachhpura village takes you through the various monuments of Mughal Era in midst of rural setting intertwined with the communities along with stunning view of the Taj.

Tourist Village Kachhpura offers a Mughal Heritage Walk with an experience of the Mughal era with its **"NATURAL AND RUSTIC SETTING"** View of rare **"RICH ARCHITECTURAL HERIATGE"** and feel of the **"LIVING TRADITIONS".** The youth from the community, trained as tour facilitator, provide both historical facts and anecdotes. Experience the Kachhpura tourist village and explore some lesser known monuments in the shadow of the Taj and Red fort.

For an everlasting impression of the heritage of Agra observe the traditional and local craft souvenirs made by women in the community. For those who may wish to avail of the extended hospitality of Kachhpura people, there is a provision for Tea Terrace with a view of Taj with standard, comfortable, clean, affordable, and safe facilities. The whole village walk through India's Mughal History and amiable people is an unforgettable experience.

The walk is facilitated by the community youth, trained as Tour facilities, who provide both historical facts and anecdotes.

A detail route map of tourist village Kachhpura is shown below:-

Rich Living Traditions

Humayuns Mosque

Glimpses of Rural life

Chowk

Sanjhi Art

Gyara Sidi (The Eleven Steps)

Natural and Rustic Setting

Mehtab Bagh (The Moon Light Garden)

MAIN ATTRACTION OF KACHHPURA TOURIST VILLAGE:

The main attractions of the village include:

1. Visit to the three significant **Mughal Era monuments** which are rich in architectural heritage- Gyarah Sidi, Humayun Mosque and Mehtab Bagh

    - **Gyarah Sidi (Eleven Steps)** is a lesser known monument at the starting of the tourist village walk. After Babar, his eldest son Humayun ascended the Mughal throne. Humayun had keen interest in astrology. He built Jantar-Mantar, a set of monuments that enabled Humayun to study the star constellations. Today, only small parts of Jantar-Mantar remain and are known as the Gyarah Sidi or eleven steps. The Gyarah Sidi is carved out of a single block of stone. It sits at the edge of River Yamuna providing a view of the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort.

    - **Humayu Mosque** is another important monument which is situated inside the village. This is a peculiar kind of mosque ever built by Mughals in India. Within the compound there are several sandstones engraved graves associated with the Mughals.

    - The **Moonlight** garden **(Mehtab Bagh):** Mehtab meaning moon was probably planned to view Taj in the moonlight when its beauty is mirrored in the River Yamuna and the river reflects back new colors on the Taj. The garden has excellent architecture and irrigation methodology to see and also provides a brilliant opportunity to photo shoot in Mehtab Bagh from the backyard of Taj.

2. **Village Experience:** A narrow bridle path though agriculture fields take visitors into the ancient village of Kachhpura, associated with the history of Taj Mahal. Kachhpura village was originally the property of the Hindu King of Kachh, Raja Maan Singh; who also owned the lands on which Taj Mahal stands. According to the Shahjahan-Nama, Emperor Shahjahan compensated Raja Maan Singh with four huge palaces to acquire the site for building the Taj Mahal as a memorial to his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal.

    - Kachhpura provides an insight into the local culture and rural life of the region. Glimpses of traditional lifestyle of the villagers are seen through few elders smoking hookah, shoe making, local village gym, visit to a typical community household (living area, cooking area, religious area, etc). The streets are adorned with brightly coloured small houses with elaborate doorway and niches which were used for lighting the house with candles or diyas historically. The walls are painted with **Sanjhi art** associated with the Braj culture of the region done using natural colours like terracotta, lime etc. The village school situated near courtyard is also a major attraction for tourists.

3. **Warm hospitality:** the guests are welcomed by traditional *aarti* by village girls followed by singing and garlanding. To rejuvenate the spirit of the visitor's and small refreshment is arranged by the community on terrace of a house providing incredible view of the Taj which is a mesmerizing and unforgettable experience. The visitors can try the local cuisine served in traditional style with community, if booked in advance.

4. **Traditional Art and craft**

   - **The central courtyard** (old Panchayat Platform used traditionally as a community space) of the village is a major attraction of Kachhpura. The courtyard offers a view of activities taking place in/ around the village information centre: - Street Theater/ local Folk Dances, Henna Tattoo making along with display of artifacts made by the community.

   - **Traditional livelihood:** During the walk, you can stop and talk to the local cottage industry for leather shoe making in Agra which makes Agra an exporter in the Shoe industry all across the globe. Women groups are involved in making cloth bags, hand fans from waste, local musical instrument and toys which can be shopped from the stall near the central courtyard. Pottery making can be seen along with trying your hands on it to make small earthen ware.

   - **Local art:** Traditional folk art can also be experienced as you pass through the local temple with humming of religious songs in the community. Street play/local dances by the girls in the village is a lively experience of the rich culture.

5. **Community Development Works:** Center for Urban and Regional Excellence (CURE) an NGO has built sustainable livelihoods for youth and women from low income settlements and improving their living environments through infrastructure services and integration within the city.

   - **Improving Sanitation:** CURE has mobilized the community and supported in the construction of Household toilets, laying of roads and drains and construction of Decentralized Waste Water Treatment system (DEWAT) which has significantly improve the living environment of the people.

   - **Livelihood opportunities:** Women groups have been trained in making products/souvenirs which can be supplied to the tourism industry and sold in the local market. Two self help groups have been formed. Community youth has been trained as tour animators and Mughal Heritage Walk started in the village to provide livelihood opportunities to the youth.